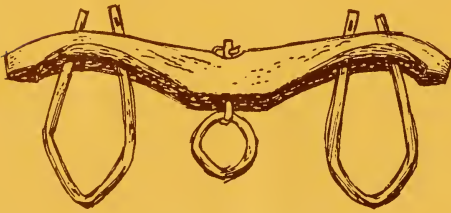


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Abraham Lincoln

AN ADDRESS BY

Hon. Newton Bateman, LL. D.



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No. 43 .

PREFACE
TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS little volume is its own excuse for existence. Dr. Bateman's family have authorized its publication, in compliance with very many requests from friends of the author. The lecture as delivered, will live in the memories and hearts of the many who have heard it, as will the vivid and impressive personality of the speaker. We believe that its intrinsic worth demands the permanence of print, that the audience may not be limited to those who have been privileged to hear that eloquent voice, now stilled.

• We hope to follow this monograph very soon, by a volume consisting of Dr. Bateman's life and lectures, for which we bespeak the welcome with which our father's words were always received by his loyal "Boys and Girls" of Old Knox.

PREFACE
TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE publishers of the first edition of this charming address on Abraham Lincoln by his intimate friend, Dr. Newton Bateman, did not take into consideration the growing interest in the subject, and today there are many collectors of Lincolniana who have never so much as seen a copy of this address.

This second edition is intended, not for the general public, but for collectors, and only one hundred copies will be printed, each being numbered and signed.

A significant feature of this address is the entire omission by Dr. Bateman of the important (if true) interview between himself and Lincoln, in which the latter makes plain his religious convictions.

N. E. Barker

PERSONAL REMINISCENCES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was born in Hardin County, Kentucky, February 12, 1809.

I first met him in the city of Springfield, Illinois, in 1842, and from that time till his departure from that place for Washington on the 11th of February, 1861, I saw much of him in the court room, on the hustings, at social gatherings, in the State House, on the streets, and elsewhere.

But it was not till my removal to Springfield, in 1858, after my first election to the State Superintendency of Schools, that my personal acquaintance with him can be said to have been close and intimate.

Soon after his first nomination for the Presidency, finding his modest little house on Eighth Street, in Springfield, too small for the throngs of visitors which pressed upon him from all parts of the country, his friends installed him in the Executive Chamber of the old State House, where he continued to hold daily receptions till his departure for Washington the following February.

My office during the whole of that period of nearly eight months, was in a room adjoining the one used by Mr. Lincoln, and communicating with it by a door which was usually wide open,—at Mr. Lincoln's request,—to secure for both rooms a better ventilation, and to afford relief to his often over-crowded chamber, the surplus frequently overflowing into my office while awaiting their turn to see Mr. Lincoln. Nearly every day, during the summer months, he would pass from one room to the other, shaking hands and chatting with his friends and callers.

It was during these eight months in which I heard and saw him every day, for several hours, that I had excellent opportunities of observing and studying the man.

I do not need to say to you that there was, in Mr. Lincoln, a quiet but keen sense of humor. No reference to him would be complete that should omit this characteristic. "The little story," of which he was so fond, and which he often turned to such good account, is blended with all our notions of the man. He was himself a capital story-teller,—an artist indeed in that line. He knew how to select and arrange the material, what to put in the fore-ground, what in the back-ground, what to set up as the central figure, and how to make all converge towards the final climax. He knew how to whet curiosity just enough to hold the attention of all to the end, without giving the least clue as to the nature of the final explosion; and he especially excelled in that supreme generalship which enables an accomplished story-teller to keep his reserves out of sight till the opportune moment, and then suddenly deploy them with dramatic effect, and make the story end with their dashing charge.

His manner in these pleasantries is not to be described. It was usually very quiet—never boisterous, but so piquant and peculiar; such a twinkle in his eye, such workings of his mobile face, such lurking fun in his tones, and such quaint drolleries of expression.

One thing in this connection is noteworthy; in not one of hundreds of stories which I heard him tell, was there the semblance of malice or venom—no personal cut or sting. However broad the travesty, keen the wit, or side-shaking the burlesque, he was careful never to wound the feelings or trifle with the sensibilities of any man, present or absent. His humor was the overflow of a gentle and tender nature, and as free from malice as the prattle of a child.

He would tell a story with as much delight and zest at his own expense as at the expense of another,—rather more, if anything, I often thought.

One of his favorite places of resort in Springfield when seeking rest and social recreation, was the little consulting room, south of and adjoining the Supreme Court Library, in the old State House, and the Secretary of State's office in the same build-

ing. Entering the latter one morning after his return from court in Petersburg, Menard County—and when hacks and stage coaches were the only means of reaching that place—seeing a number of us standing about, he said: “Sit down, boys; I have a little story to tell you.” A circle was soon formed around the stove, and he began: “Going to Petersburg the other day, I was the only passenger in the hack. After we’d gone about a mile from town, the driver, whom I didn’t know, turned around to me and said: ‘Have suthin warmin’, Mister?’—it was a cold day,—at the same time handing me a suspicious looking black bottle. ‘No, thank you’ said I, ‘I don’t drink.’ The driver looked surprised, but lapsed into silence and drove on. After awhile he turned around again with the remark: ‘Have one, Mister?’ reaching out a handful of old stogy cigars, such as used to sell in Kentucky, ‘seventeen for a cent, bit a barrel, and two for nothing.’ ‘No, thank you,’ said I, ‘I don’t smoke.’ This time the driver looked more surprised but said nothing. Two or three miles further on, pulling from his pocket a plug of tobacco half a foot long and as black as tar, he poked it towards me, saying: ‘Have a chaw, Mister?’ ‘No, thank you’ said I, ‘I don’t chew.’ At this his face was a picture of blank astonishment, but he drove on in silence. Half an hour or so afterwards, turning around again, he said, with a concerned look and tone: ‘Mister, I’m a’feared for you!’ ‘Afraid for me?’ ‘Yes I am—I’m downright uneasy about you!’ ‘Why so,’ said I. ‘Well, I’ll tell you. You don’t drink, nor smoke, nor chaw; and I’ve noticed all my life, that when a man hain’t got no little vices, like them, he’s mighty apt to have big ones—I’m really consarned about you, Mister!’ ”

Mr. Lincoln was often pitted at the Bar, against a very eminent lawyer, of Springfield, who was extremely careless, almost slatternly, in his dress and manners. In a certain cause in which they were engaged as opposing counsel—a cause of no great intrinsic importance—Mr. Lincoln, after his adversary’s masterly review of the evidence and clear statement of the legal principles involved, plainly perceived that unless he could execute some sort of a flank movement so as to break the force of

that speech, he was certainly defeated. His quick eye had already discovered an irregularity in his antagonist's personal appearance. Rising in his turn to address the jury, he said: "My learned friend has made an able speech to you. He has analyzed the testimony with his accustomed acuteness and skill, and laid down to you the law with his usual ability and confidence. And I am not going to assert, positively, that he is mistaken, either as to the law or the evidence. It would not become me to do so, for he is an older and better lawyer than I am. Nevertheless I may properly make a suggestion to you, gentlemen of the jury. And I now ask you, and each of you, to look, closely and attentively, at my friend, the counsel on the other side, as he sits there before you,—look at him all over, but especially at the upper part of him, and then tell me if it may not be possible that a lawyer who is so unmindful of the proprieties of this place as to come into the presence of his Honor and into your presence, gentlemen of the jury, with his standing collar on wrong-end-to, may not possibly be mistaken in his opinion of the law? That is all I have to say."

The explosion that followed this speech may be imagined. All eyes were turned toward the luckless object of it, and, sure enough, there the learned barrister sat, with his standing collar buttoned on wrong, and its two points sticking out behind, like horns.

I need not say that Mr. Lincoln was incapable of indulging in such pleasantries in a trial of any serious importance.

One of the most impressive incidents in Mr. Lincoln's life as a lawyer that I ever witnessed, occurred in a murder trial of much notoriety at the time.

The court room was crowded—excitement ran high—Mr. Lincoln, who was for the defense, had just made one of his calm, clear, plain, and forcible speeches. Firmly believing that his client was innocent, it was evident that he had made the jury believe so, too. The senior counsel on the other side rose to reply. Noting the effect on the jury of the speech just made, he was determined to counteract it at all hazards.

"Well, gentlemen," said he, "you have heard Mr. Lincoln—

‘honest Abe Lincoln,’ they call him, I believe. And I suppose you think you have heard the honest truth—or at least that Mr. Lincoln honestly believes what he has told you to be the truth. I tell you, he believes no such thing. That frank, ingenuous face of his, as you are weak enough to suppose, those looks and tones of such unsophisticated simplicity, those appeals to your minds and consciences as sworn jurors, are all assumed for the occasion, gentlemen; all a mask, gentlemen. You have been listening for the last hour to an actor, who knows well how to play the role of honest seeming, for effect.”

At this moment, amid breathless stillness, Mr. Lincoln arose, and with deep emotion, and an indescribable expression of pain upon his gaunt features, said: “Mr. —, you have known me for years and *you know* that not a word of that language can be truthfully applied to me;” and sat down.

The lawyer hesitated a moment, changed color, and then his better nature regaining the mastery, he turned to Mr. Lincoln and said calmly and with much feeling: “Yes, Mr. Lincoln, I do know it, and *I take it all back.*”

The whole audience broke out into an irrepressible burst of applause, as the two gentlemen approached each other and shook hands, after which the trial proceeded.

If great and sudden prosperity is one of the supreme tests of character, that of Mr. Lincoln was founded on a rock.

After his nomination, and still more after his election, he became at once the central figure in the nation, and for seven months his reception-room in the old State House was daily thronged with visitors, including large numbers of the most distinguished men of the country. During all this time, I saw more or less of him every day, as I have said; yet by no word or act that I ever witnessed did he manifest the slightest pride or elation or any consciousness even, that he was the “observed of all observers.”

One of the most touching incidents of this time, was his hearty and delightful recognition of the poor men and women whom he had known in the days of his obscurity and poverty, numbers of whom called to see him.

No matter with whom he might be conversing—whether judges, or senators, or governors—when one of these old friends called he would instantly excuse himself, hurry forward, take the timid or embarrassed person by the hand, offer a chair and talk of old times with all the simple familiarity of former days—unmindful of the magnates in his room, and often to their astonishment and apparent disgust.

One day, when his room was filled with an unusual number of distinguished people, including a New York senator, a visitor was announced,—for Mr. Lincoln had given a peremptory order to the janitor to refuse admittance to nobody, more especially not to exclude any of his old friends,—whose appearance must have amazed some of the very elegant gentlemen present. It was an elderly lady in homespun, with a large, red, motherly face hidden in the recesses of an old-fashioned sun-bonnet, holding in her hand a parcel done up in a coarse brown paper and tied with a cotton string. Mr. Lincoln recognized her at once as an old friend—handed her a chair, sat down by her side, and in the most simple and unembarrassed way began to talk about her folks, looking around occasionally, to see if his distinguished guests heard and appreciated her quaint remarks and sayings. Presently, with some shyness, she untied the parcel, and handed Mr. Lincoln the contents—an immense pair of woolen stockings—remarking: “I know ’taint much, Mr. Linkin, but I spun all that wool, and I knit every stitch of them stockings with my own hands, and I thought maybe you’d accept of them for old acquaintance’ sake.”

Tears came into his eyes as he gratefully took them, assuring her that if elected, he should take them with him to Washington, where he was sure none such could be obtained. And then, still talking and laughing, he took the articles by the tops, one in each hand, and held them up in triumph before his guests, who all joined in the merriment, the senator remarking, as he scanned the very long and narrow things: “The lady had a correct apprehension of your longitude and latitude, Mr. Lincoln.”

Another day, (after the nomination but before the election),

an elderly man, an old-time friend, called and said: "Good morning, Mr. President." "Not yet," was the reply. "We mustn't count our chickens before they are hatched, you know." "Well," rejoined the man, "Maybe yourn aint quite hatched, but they're peepin' sure."

Similar incidents were of almost daily occurrence—these may serve as samples.

Souvenirs of almost every description were brought from near and far and presented to him in that famous reception room, both during and after the canvass, until it resembled a museum of curiosities. The articles were of all sorts and sizes,—some very quaint and curious, some cheap and home-made, others elegant and costly; canes in great variety, from the woods of Indiana and Kentucky, and from the shops of Broadway. There were pieces of old rails that he had split, fragments of the log cabin in which he had lived, dilapidated specimens of the furniture he had made and used, stray bits of the surveyor's instruments he had once owned, mementoes of the Black Hawk war, in which he took part, books, pictures and engravings. There was a rustic chair, composed of thirty-seven little saplings, one from every state in the Union and each piece labelled with the name of the sender, and of the State whence it came; and an immense wooden chain of thirty-seven links, all carved with rare skill from a single piece of timber, and designed to symbolize the indissoluble union of the states. Those two articles, with many others, remained in the room until Mr. Lincoln left it for Washington, and were seen by thousands from every part of the country.

The presentation of each one of the hundreds of articles, of which I have named but a few, was the occasion of a little speech or story, or at least of a few pleasant and befitting words from Mr. Lincoln, nearly all of which I heard: for, as already said, the door between his room and mine was almost always open, and he always talked in so loud and merry a tone on these occasions, that every word was perfectly distinct as I sat at my desk in my own room.

He would often call me in to see some particularly rare or queer thing that had been brought him, or to introduce me to some old friend—in which latter case the formula was generally about as follows: "This is my little friend, the big schoolmaster of Illinois."

In a conversation about our rooms, before he took possession of his, I expressed my fears that he and his friends might be interrupted by the loud talking of the folks who would be calling to see me on school business nearly every hour of the day. "Never mind about that," said he, "If you can stand my noise, I can stand yours."

Let it not be supposed that no graver scenes were enacted in that reception room, than those to which I have thus far referred. These were only the lighter incidents of those passing days, each one of which had its hours of deep and anxious conference touching the state of the country and the portentous shadows that even then were rolling up from the South. If there were these brighter tints upon the canvas, they but served to deepen the darkness that was gathering in the back-ground of the picture. Many a pale, earnest face, of statesman and patriot did I see by Lincoln's side in these memorable days, and often was his face the palest and most earnest of all. As the probability of his election gradually ripened into moral certainty, the exceeding gravity of the situation impressed him more and more; and, knowing as I did, something of the deeper nature of the man whose lighter moods only, were seen by the many, and what a weight of foreboding was on his heart,—it was often a marvel to me how he could go through the social ordeals of each day as he did.

The months passed in that reception room were turned to the best account by Mr. Lincoln. Meeting there men from every portion of the country, he was afforded rare facilities for increasing his already remarkable knowledge of the American people, and of the gigantic political problem, the solution of which he was soon to undertake. Those daily receptions, therefore, were not merely occasions for the interchange of social and personal courtesies, but for the study of the general situation,

and of those intricate and delicate questions which would inevitably confront his administration, at its very opening. That room was a school to him, and to the uttermost did he improve its advantages.

"I am perfectly astonished," said a tall and handsome Mississippi Colonel to me one day, after a long conversation with Mr. Lincoln; "I expected to find a fierce and ignorant fanatic, but I find instead, not only an affable and genial gentleman, but a wise and moderate statesman. I find myself forced to believe him honest and upright and just; and, to tell you the truth, almost to love him, in spite of myself. Why, our whole southern people are deceived in regard to that man." And so on.

This is but a sample of a revulsion of feeling and opinion, wrought by an hour's conversation with Mr. Lincoln on political matters, in the case of many gentlemen from the South, who had not before seen or heard him.

Mr. Lincoln was extremely careful and cautious in his statements, whether of facts or of opinion. He was accurate and exact—he aimed at the precise truth. He would never be positive unless he was sure. This marked characteristic of his mind gave rise to certain forms of expression, which were peculiar to him. Whoever heard him in Court, before the people, or even in earnest discussion with a neighbor at a street corner, in which the expression: "It seems to me," or "It appears to me," or "It does appear to me," did not occur again and again? I suppose I heard him use those phrases, especially the last one, thousands of times.

His habit of accuracy was illustrated at my expense on a certain occasion, when I submitted to him for his opinion and criticism, a certain paper that I had written. (He had invited me to consult him freely.) The object of that paper was to show the complexity of our form of government. In it was this sentence: "More questions of constitutional law have arisen in the United States, during the brief period of our national existence, than in England in the last five hundred years." "Well," said he, after reading the sentence, "That is a matter of arithmetic. I can't tell you whether that is right or not, and I don't see how

anybody can, without going to the records and counting the cases, on each side. As precision is not important to your present purpose, it does appear to me, that if I were you, I would loosen that statement a little—take the arithmetic out of it!”

I thanked him, and retired with an able-bodied flea in each ear.

Mr. Lincoln was very fond of children. His surviving friends in Springfield will never forget the long-familiar spectacle of his towering form in the street with Rob or Will or Tad, or all three, perhaps, at his side—nor his exhaustless imperturbability and patience at the pranks and antics of his boys. They would sometimes be sent to hasten his steps homeward to dinner or tea. Promptly sallying forth from his office, he was sure to be stopped by some friend or neighbor at nearly every street corner, for a little chat—for somehow, the very streets seemed brighter when Abraham Lincoln appeared in them, and the moodiest face lightened up as his gaunt figure and pleasant face were seen approaching. But these detentions were not appreciated by the boys, whose keen appetites stirred them on to get Paterfamilias home as soon as possible. In the course of these efforts by the youngsters, the future President of the United States was very often placed in very amusing positions and attitudes. The spectacle of two little chaps tugging and pulling at his coat-tails, while the third pushed in front, was often beheld—while Mr. Lincoln, talking and laughing, and pretending to scold, but all the while backing under the steady pressure of the above-mentioned forces, raised his voice louder and louder as he receded, till it died away in the distance and further conversation became impossible. He then faced about, and the little fellows hurried him off in triumph towards home.

His patience and good nature seemed absolutely proof against all the petty annoyances of life—I often saw him depressed, bowed with grief, mournfully sad—or stirred with indignation—but irritated, and ruffled in temper, I never saw him.

He was one day playing a game of chess with Judge Treat, in the little room back of the Law-Library of which I have spoken. At a certain stage of the game, “Tad” came to summon

him to dinner. Knowing the boy's genius for mischief, Mr. Lincoln kept him away from the table with his long arms, still watching the game, till at length the little rogue's assaults ceased, and the father relaxed his vigilance. The next moment the table rose bodily in the air, tilted, and the chess-board and chess-men rolled on the floor! The good Judge, much amazed, advised summary and condign punishment; but Mr. Lincoln, after a moment's futile effort to capture Tad, who made fast time out of the State House, laughingly remarked, (referring to the state of the game when the catastrophe happened), "I guess that upheaval was rather fortunate for you, Judge!" and quietly put on his hat and followed Tad home.

The day after his nomination, Mr. Ashman, president of the Convention, with a large party of distinguished gentlemen, members of the Convention, arrived in Springfield to inform Mr. Lincoln of his nomination, and to receive his reply.

Mr. Lincoln had requested me to escort this party to his house. Mr. Ashman's address, and Mr. Lincoln's reply are matters of history. The aptness of Mr. Lincoln's words, and the unstudied dignity of his manner, in that trying moment, in the little crowded parlor, surprised and delighted his guests, few of whom had ever seen him before. As he sat down, Mr. Boutwell, afterwards Secretary of the Treasury, and Senator from Massachusetts, whispered to me: "They told me he was a rough diamond—I protest against the adjective—nothing could have been more elegant and appropriate."

Soon after, little Tad worked his way up to his father's side, and whispered very loud in his ear. Mr. Lincoln knew that nearly everyone in the room must have heard the whisper—but not the least disconcerted, he arose, and laughing, said: "You see, gentlemen, that if I am elected, it won't do to put that young man in the cabinet—he can't be intrusted with state secrets." The ready wit of this pleasantry was immensely enjoyed. After the merriment had subsided, Mr. Lincoln, still standing, remarked: "And now, gentlemen, as you are already aware, Mrs. Lincoln will be happy to meet you in the dining

room"—and led the way to as pleasant and merry a tea party as ever gathered in that little house on Eighth street.

A little incident, showing how truly his noble nature was interpreted by the intuitions of children, may here be mentioned: A little girl who had heard Mr. Lincoln spoken of as "ugly" was taken by her father to see him. Whereupon she exclaimed, "Why, Pa, he's not ugly at all, he's beautiful."

In his oral reply to the committee, he said that he would in due time send them a written note, formally accepting the nomination. Late one afternoon, a few days afterward, he being alone in his room in the state house, and I in mine, he called me in his usual cheery way. Handing me a note written in pencil, he said: "That is my reply to the good people whom you brought to my house the other night. I think it is all right, but grammar, you know, is not my strong hold; and as several persons will probably read that little thing, I wish you would look it over carefully and see if it needs doctoring anywhere."

I took the paper and slowly read it through. It was addressed to the Hon. George Ashman. In it was this sentence: "The declaration of principles and sentiments which accompanied your letter meets my approval, and it shall be my care *to not* violate it, or disregard it, in any part."

Handing the note back to Mr. Lincoln, I said that the language was all strictly correct, with one very slight exception—almost too trivial for mention. "Well, what is it?" said he, "I wish to be correct without any exception, however trivial." Well, then, Mr. Lincoln, I replied, it would, perhaps, be as well to transpose the "to" and "not" in that sentence—pointing to the one just quoted. Mr. Lincoln looked at it a moment and said: "Oh, you think I'd better turn those two little fellows end for end, eh?" "Yes," I said, "I guess you had"—and he did.

Another scene I vividly remember: It was the night after the ever-memorable election of November, 1860. The streets and public places were thronged with anxious people waiting to hear how the battle had gone. It was known by some of the ladies that their husbands, brothers and friends would be up nearly all night, watching for the telegrams from the different

states; they therefore met, about ten o'clock in Watson's Hall, on the south side of the public square, with a good supply of refreshments. The attractions of this place were soon widely known, and instead of the expected few, the ladies extended their hospitality to hundreds. It was a memorable night. Instead of toasts and sentiment, we had the reading of telegrams from every quarter of the country. As these came in from time to time, and the reader mounted a chair with the dispatches in his hand, all was breathless stillness in a moment. If the news was unfavorable, anxious glances were exchanged, and for a moment the hum of voices would be restrained and subdued. But if, as was generally the case, the telegrams told of fresh majorities for Father Abraham, they were greeted with shouts that made the very building shake.

The entertainment was gotten up by the ladies, with special reference to Mr. Lincoln himself, and his personal friends; and again and again, as the night wore on, Mr. Lincoln came in with a handful of dispatches, and by special request, mounted the chair and read them to us himself. At length, at a very late hour, a telegram was received from Philadelphia, and handed to Mr. Lincoln. All eyes were fixed upon his tall form and slightly trembling lips, as he read in a clear and distinct voice: "The city and state for Lincoln by decisive majority," and immediately added in slow, emphatic tones, and with a significant gesture of the forefinger: "I think that settles it." So thought we all—and what congratulations and hand-shakings followed—how the glee club did sing—how hats did fly into the air—what huzzahs rolled out upon the night—how men danced who had never danced before—(they do say that the feet of this witness behaved in a very singular manner, but that could hardly have been!) How Mr. Lincoln looked on and laughed at the fearful and wonderful performances of the amateur Terpsichoreans—and how, between two and three o'clock in the morning, we all took him by the hand again, with a "good night" and a "God bless you," and separated.

On the eleventh of February, 1861, on the day preceding his fifty-second birthday, Mr. Lincoln set out for Washington. He

had sent special invitations to a few of his old friends to accompany him as far as Indianapolis. That I was included in the number, I shall be pardoned for remembering with peculiar pleasure. That note of invitation is preserved among my most cherished memorabilia of Abraham Lincoln. I shall ever regret that imperative official duties would not allow me to join the party.

But I accompanied him to the railroad station, and stood by his side on the platform of the car, when he delivered that memorable farewell to his friends and neighbors. Of those, an immense concourse had assembled to bid him good bye. The day was dark and chill, and a drizzling rain had set in. The signal bell had rung, and all was in readiness for the departure, when Mr. Lincoln appeared on the front platform of the special car—removed his hat, looked out for a moment upon the sea of silent, upturned faces, and heads bared in loving reverence and sympathy, regardless of the rain; and, in a voice broken and tremulous with emotion and a most unutterable sadness, yet slow and measured and distinct, and with a certain prophetic far-off look, which no one who saw can ever forget, began: "My friends, no one, not in my position, can appreciate the sadness I feel at this parting. To this people I owe all that I am. Here I have lived more than a quarter of a century. Here my children were born, and here one of them lies buried. I know not how soon I shall see you again. A duty devolves upon me which is greater, perhaps, than that which has devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. He would never have succeeded, except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed without the same divine aid which sustained him; and upon the same Almighty Being I place my reliance and support. And I hope you, my friends, will pray that I may receive that divine assistance, without which I cannot succeed, and with which success is certain. Again, I bid you all an affectionate farewell."

His pale face was literally wet with tears as he re-entered the car, and the train rolled out of the city, which Abraham Lincoln was to enter no more—till, his great work finished, he

would come back from the war, a victor and a conqueror, though with the seal of death upon his visage. Some politicians derided the solemn words of that farewell—but I knew they were the utterances of his inmost soul—never did speech of man move me as that did. Seeing every mournful tremor of those lips—noting every shadow that flitted over that face—catching every inflection of that voice—the words seemed to drop, every one, into my heart, and to be crystalized in my memory. I hurried back to my office, locked the door, (for I felt that I must be alone), wrote out the address from memory, and had it published in the city papers in advance of the reporters. And when the reports of the stenographers were published, they differed from mine in only two or three words, and as to even those, I have always believed that mine were right, for the speech was engraved on my heart and memory, and I had but to copy the engraving.

And so, Abraham Lincoln left Springfield, and passed on to his great work, followed by the benediction and prayers, and by the anxieties too, of a loving people. Events soon proved that he had, indeed, undertaken a task greater than had been devolved upon any other man since the days of Washington. From the clouds that had been massing in baleful darkness along the southern skies, the red volts soon began to leap and the sullen thunders to be heard. The earth which had been rocking in the mighty throes of convulsion, now yawned beneath our feet, and we gazed into the horrible abyss. Years have passed since the flames ceased to belch from that black and bloody crater—the flowers of thirty summers have bloomed and faded upon its rugged slopes, hiding and softening the rifts and seams ploughed by the dynamics of war. But we cannot look calmly down it, even yet, for that a mighty host of our loved and bravest, lie there forever cut off from the light of the sun. There lie my kindred and yours, and there they will lie, till He, who is the Resurrection and the Life, shall bid them come forth.

But, though never more shall we clasp again those fleshless hands, or hear those vanished voices—though to most of us life

can never again be as it was, by reason of the unreturning footsteps of sons and brothers and fathers and friends, who left our sides long ago—yet may we learn the lessons of the struggle in which they perished—the ideas that rode like Cherubim, upon the wings of that crimson tempest. And in so doing we shall see the character and place in history, of Abraham Lincoln. In the intense blackness of that awful background, the majesty of the man stands out in bold relief.

The storm through which his brave heart and steady hands conducted the Nation, demonstrates the regency of moral ideas in history. It was the explosive power of such ideas, working beneath a gigantic and ponderous system of injustice and wrong, that culminated in the earthquake of 1861, and caused the cry of our agony to be heard through all the coasts of the world. Moral ideas are the mightiest things beneath God's throne—right and truth are imperial powers, armed with a Divine prerogative, and with the strength of a decree of God. And those were the forces that Lincoln was appointed to wield—these were the invisible legions that reinforced the armies of Liberty.

Lincoln saw and believed and felt all this—and this it was that made him strong. He recognized, as did no other American statesman of this century, the moral element in politics. He believed with all his intellect and soul, that freedom was right, and that bondage was wrong—not merely inexpedient, impolitic, but wrong. This is the great, central, golden fact in his character. This is the glory that crowns him even now, like the aureola; and this is the force that is fast lifting him to an apotheosis among the perpetual kings, in the circumpolar skies of history.

It is impossible to account in any other way for the place that Abraham Lincoln has in our hearts, and in the heart of Christendom, to-day. Not his intellect, clear, robust and powerful as that was—not any masterliness of policy, for he was rather the interpreter of Providence and the agent of the popular will, than a Cromwellian originator of bold policies—not his personal appearance and presence, for he was homely in person, and without elegance or courtliness of manners: no, it is in the light

and glory of his moral goodness, his lofty aims and his fidelity to truth, that he stands transfigured to-day.

“God peoples the historic Pantheon not so much with intellects as with souls—less with geniuses than with virtues.” Persons change to principles,—the material to the spiritual. Good men become the embodiment of an idea—their face becomes the face of a truth—their defects fall away with years, and time, which clarifies, uplifts. Distance only reveals the grandeur of souls essentially great, till, like Mount Blanc to the receding traveller, they tower, lone and sublime, across the valley of ages.

Nor let it be said that such idealizations of history are falsehoods, they are rather the grandest of truths. The world grows to what it gazes on. The face that hangs sun-like over our American history—the face of Washington—though doubtless much idealized, is true to our conception of the essential moral nature of the man. And it is essential moral grandeur and beauty, not brilliancy or genius, that makes the face one of love and power to the Nation—one of the mightiest historical forces beneath the sun.

And henceforth, thus idealized, transfigured, another face is to be set forever amid the lights of historic skies. As the pilgrim to that tomb in Mount Vernon feels the spell of a more than mortal influence coming over and subduing his soul,—so an awful presence wanders by noon and by night around the monument in Oak Ridge—but above that obelisk, higher than the Pleiades, shines a new star—evermore.

To that, the muse of history will point down all coming time, as the symbol of heroic loyalty to God, to country and humanity—as the apotheosis of one who walked in the light as God gave him light,—of one who, in simple child-like honesty, carried this loyalty into the mightiest and most awful issues of human history—of one who, steadfast to the last, “In charity to all, in malice to none,” gave up life itself for duty. Does not such honesty and loyalty of soul, possess an essential and a moral kingliness? Does it not claim, and shall it not bear, a perpetual scepter and a fadeless crown in the historic realm?

It is startling, to us who knew him so long and so well, to think of one so near, and yet so far—of one so long beside us in the common and familiar walks of life, now thrown so high amid the everlasting lights of the moral and historic arena.

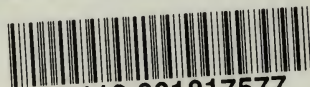
But, I repeat, this idealization of Abraham Lincoln is surely in progress—his translation to a place amid the constellated names upon which the good will gaze forever, is already begun. All that was homely and common in the corporeal type and feature of the man, is fading out and falling away. Robed in the beauty and grandeur of a soul, honest to its very core, and to the very death, he is to shine forth in the skies of the future, more glorious than the Belviderian God of light.

I was the last of his Springfield friends to press his hands, as the train moved off on that lowering eleventh of February, 1861. That hand, that good right hand, that had ever been lifted for the defense of the poor and needy, that afterwards held the pen and wrote the words that enfranchised a race—I was never to take again.

Four years and two months passed. The bells of a Continent wailed out a requiem knell. Every flag dropped to half-mast. Belts of latitude and longitude, and successive States, were draped in mourning. The dirge that began in Washington and was taken up by State after State and city after city, died away at last in the streets of Springfield. Abraham Lincoln had come home,—and “never had conqueror in the past such a cortege and following.” I saw him again: and as I gazed upon that form, pale, silent and marred, as it lay in state in yonder humble capitol, I felt that the transfiguration of which I have spoken had already begun. History and death had touched that face to an awe and majesty that seemed to belong no longer to the sons of men. On that brow the assassin’s mark was already changing to the aureola—to the glory—and from the mute lips, the words: “In charity to all, in malice towards none,” seemed mingling with the hymns of history, down the aisles of all the future.

THE END

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